

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 EB-08 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6527
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 MOGADISCIO 1445

PLEASE PASS TO AID/W

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, SO
SUBJ: EMBASSY INSPECTION OF SOMALI REFUGEE CAMPS

1. AFTER LONG DELAYS AND REPEATED REQUESTS TO OBTAIN PERMISSION EMBASSY POLOFF AND AID PROGRAM OFFICER LEFT JUNE 5 FOR FIRST-HAND INSPECTION OF REFUGEE CAMPS IN CENTRAL AND NORTH-WESTERN REGIONS OF SOMALIA. EMBOFFS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY REPRESENTATIVE OF MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (AHMED MOGH ADAN), REPRESENTATIVE OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, (OSMAN MOHAMED AHMED), AND TWO ARMED SOLDIERS. THE GROUP TRAVELED IN AN EMBASSY VEHICLE AND A GSDR LANDROVER. THE ITINERARY WAS AS FOLLOWS:

JUNE 5: DEPARTURE MOGADISCIO 14.30
ARRIVALE BELET WEYNE 21.00 (OVERNIGHT)

JUNE 6: TOUR OF REFUGEE CAMPS NEAR BELET WEYNE, AND IN ABUDWAK REGION PROCEED TO GALCAIO (OVERNIGHT)

JUNE 7: CALCAOI TO BURAO (OVERNIGHT)

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JUNE 8: BURAO TO HARGEISA (OVERNIGHT-2)

JUNE 9: TOUR OF REFUGEE CAMPS NEAR HARGEISA AND IN GEBILE DISTRICT.

JUNE 10: RETURN TO MOGADISCIO (BY AIR)

2. OTHER THAN SOME ROUGH ROAD CONDITIONS, WHEN NOT ON THE RECENTLY COMPLETED 960 KM CHINESE ROAD, AND SOME LACK OF PLANNING ON PART OF GSDR OFFICIALS, THE TRIP WENT SMOOTHLY, WITH NO PROBLEMS. WELCOME ACCORDED AMERICANS WAS, BY SOMALI STANDARDS, WARM AND RECEPTIVE.

3. REFUGEE CAMPS: REFUGEE CAMPS, TRANSITING STATIONS AND RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS WERE VISITED IN THE DISTRICTS OF BELET WEYNE, ABUDWAK, HARGEISA AND GEBILE (IN THE REGIONS OF HIRAN, GALGADUD AND WEST GALBEED). IN MOST OF THE CAMPS AND CENTERS, THE NUMBERS SEEMED LOWER THAN THE NUMBERS GIVEN, THOUGH THE APPEARANCES MAY HAVE BEEN DECEIVING, AND MANY INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN THE CAMPS MAY SIMPLY HAVE NOT BEEN PRESENT AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT (MEN AND BOYS OUT WITH SOME LIVESTOCK). ORGANIZATION AT THE CAMPS APPEARED EXCELLENT, AND THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMP ADMINISTRATORS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS WERE VERY GOOD. ON THE WHOLE, THE EFFORTS OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH THE REFUGEE PROBLEM WERE IMPRESSIVE. NONETHELESS, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE WERE SOME MATERIAL SHORTAGES, AND THAT MANY OF THE REFUGEES LACKED SOME BASICS, (LACKING WERE HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, UTENSILS AND TOOLS THAT HAD TO BE LEFT BEHIND WHEN THEY FLED ETHIOPIA). IT IS ALSO NO DOUBT TRUE THAT THERE ARE HEALTH PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THE UNCLASSIFIED

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GSDR IS NOT PREPARED TO DEAL WITH ALTHOUGH THERE DID NOT SEEM TO BE ANY CRITICAL PROBLEMS AT THIS TIME.

4. THE REFUGEES SEEMED GENERALLY REASONABLY WELL FED. IN MOST OF THE CAMPS EFFORTS SEEMED WELL UNDERWAY TO GIVE WORK TO THE REFUGEES, AND A NUMBER OF SELF-HELP SCHEMES, PRIMARILY AGRICULTURAL, WERE IN PROGRESS. REFUGEES WERE ALSO ACTIVE IN CONSTRUCTING MUCH OF THEIR OWN SHELTERS, SOME OF TRADITIONAL DESIGN AND MATERIALS, BUT OFTEN OF CORRUGATED TIN. FOR MANY REFUGEES, HOWEVER, RESETTLEMENT AND ADJUSTMENT TO A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIFE CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE NOT ONLY DIFFICULT, BUT PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE. NOT ONLY ARE MANY NOMADS, REDUCED TO THEIR CURRENT STATUS BY THE LOSS OF THEIR LIVESTOCK AND GRAZING LAND, BUT THEIR ATTACHMENT TO THEIR NATIVE REGIONS IS SUCH THAT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MOST WILL REMAIN ANY LONGER THAN THEY FEEL IS NECESSARY.

5. NUTRITION AT THE CAMPS SEEMED REASONABLY GOOD, AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF AID FROM A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SOURCES SEEMED ADEQUATE TO THE NEEDS. THERE WERE

COMPLAINTS AT A FEW CAMPS, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS STILL A NEED FOR MORE VARIETY AND A HIGHER PROTEIN AND VITAMIN CONTENT TO THE FOOD AVAILABLE. (IT WAS MENTIONED THAT MANY OF THE REFUGEES HAD COME FROM A PERIOD OF GREAT DEPRIVATION AND WERE CONSEQUENTLY IN A SOMEWHAT WEAK CONDITION.) ON THE WHOLE, GSDR EFFORTS FOR THE REFUGEES SEEMED EXCELLENT. ONE POINT, HOWEVER, THAT MIGHT BE NOTED, WAS THAT FOOD ASSISTANCE EFFORTS AT CAMPS VISITED WERE REPRESENTED AS HAVING COME FROM THE GSDR, ALTHOUGH CLEARLY THE FOODSTUFFS HAD BEEN DONATED BY THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, UN AGENCIES, SWEDEN, AND IRAN.

6. ON ONLY ONE OCCASION DID AN OFFICIAL MENTION THE UNCLASSIFIED

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500,000 FIGURE FOR REFUGEES WHICH WE HAD HEARD SOME MONTHS EARLIER. THE OVERALL FIGURE WHICH WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN RECENTLY HAS BEEN 150,000. WE SUSPECT THE ACTUAL TOTAL NUMBER IS SOMEWHAT LOWER, ALTHOUGH WE ADMIT THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO COME UP WITH AN ACCURATE FIGURE BECAUSE OF THE NOMADIC HABITS OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NOT UNNATURAL PREFERENCE TO DEPEND ON KIN AND FRIENDS FOR ASSISTANCE.

7. IN A DISCUSSION WITH UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE STEFAN BODEMAR, EMBOFF COMPARED OBSERVATIONS OF REFUGEE CAMPS AND CONDITIONS. BODEMAR VISITED MOST OF THE SAME CAMPS AND CENTERS, AND CAME AWAY WITH VIEWS CLOSE

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6528

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TO THOSE OF EMBASSY TEAM. ONE SOMEWHAT SURPRISING THING WAS THAT ALTHOUGH BODEMAR VISITED SOME OF THE SAME CAMPS ONLY A DAY OR TWO AFTER THE EMBASSY TEAM, NO MENTION WAS MADE OF EMBASSY VISIT, AND ON ONE OCCASION WHEN ASKED IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY OTHER FOREIGN VISITORS, HE WAS TOLD THAT ONLY SOMALI OFFICIALS HAD THUS FAR VISITED THE CAMP. ALTHOUGH IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THOSE CONDUCTING BODEMAR'S VISIT WERE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHO HAD ESCORTED EMBASSY TEAM, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THEY WERE NOT PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS FOR ONE TO KNOW OF THE OTHER'S VISIT.

8. BELET WEYNE: (REGION OF HIRAN) WE WERE TOLD THAT THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 15,000 REFUGEES IN THE DISTRICT, OF WHICH ABOUT 4,000 WERE HOUSED IN CAMPS. THE THREE CAMPS IN THE DISTRICT WERE AT JAWIL, ABALE AND FERFER.

9. THE CAMP AT JAWIL, LOCATED APPROXIMATELY 28 KILOMETERS FROM BELET WEYNE, WAS A SMALL ONE, LOCATED NEAR WELLS AND NEAR AN AGRICULTURAL STATION STARTED SEVERAL YEARS AGO UNDER THE GSDR "CRASH PROGRAM". THE VILLAGE UNCLASSIFIED

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HAS BEEN THERE FOR SOME TIME, AND THE QUARTERS USED BY THE REFUGEES WERE CONSTRUCTED SEVERAL YEARS AGO ALSO AS PART OF THE "CRASH PROGRAM". EMBOFFS SAW ABOUT FIFTY FAMILY UNITS THERE, AND ESTIMATE THAT THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 250 REFUGEES AT THAT CAMP. MOST SEEMED TO BE WOMEN AND CHILDREN, ALTHOUGH WE WERE TOLD THAT THE MEN WERE OUT WORKING.

10. THE CAMP AT ABALE, APPROXIMATELY 31 KILOMETERS FROM BELET WEYNE, IS LOCATED CLOSE TO THE SHEBELLI RIVER NEAR THE DE FACTO BORDER AND IS ALSO THE SITE OF CONSIDERABLE GSDR AGRICULTURAL EFFORTS. MOST OF THE SHELTERS WERE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AND THERE WERE MANY NEAT PILES OF TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS -- STICKS, PIECES OF WOOD, FIBRE MATS AND STRAW -- WHICH APPEARED IN PLACE FOR IMMINENT CONSTRUCTION. AT ABALE WE WERE TOLD THAT THERE WERE 280 FAMILIES. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE THE ACCURACY OF THAT NUMBER, BUT IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT THAT CAMP DID CONTAIN NEARLY 1,000 INDIVIDUALS.

11. THE CAMP AT FERFER, ROUGHTLY 40 KILOMETERS FROM BELET WEYNE, SEEMED MORE OF A WAY-STATION THAN A RESETTLEMENT CAMP, THOUGH IT IS ALSO THE SITE OF A WELL-ESTABLISHED VILLAGE. SHELTERS CONSISTED, FOR THE MOST PART, OF TRADITIONAL SEMI-NOMADIC HUTS OF WOOD, STRAW, MUD AND DUNG. THE CAMP IS LOCATED ON THE DE FACTO BORDER AND NOT SURPRISINGLY, WE WERE TOLD THAT REFUGEES CAME IN DAILY. BODEMAR NOTICED WESTERN SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT FLAGS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER LAST MARCH, BUT NO FLAGS WERE FLYING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER DURING EMBOFFS VISIT. NUMBER OF REFUGEES AT FERFER GIVEN WAS 700. THIS NUMBER, WHILE POSSIBLY UNCLASSIFIED

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SOMEWHAT INFLATED, MAY NOT BE FAR OFF. THERE SEEMED TO BE ONLY A SMALL AMOUNT OF AGRICULTURE, AND SOME ANIMALS AT FERFER. EFFORTS AT SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND ORGANIZATION DID NOT SEEM AS ADVNACED HERE AS AT OTHER CAMPS IN BELET WEYNE DISTRICT.

12. ON THE WHOLE, THE REFUGEE SITUATION DOES NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT OR OF GREAT MAGNITUDE IN THE DISTRICT OF BELET WEYNE. THE REFUGEES SEEMS REASONABLY WELL-FED (AT LEAST BY SOMALI STANDARDS) AND THERE WERE NO PROBLEMS OF CRISIS PROPORTION THAT WE SAW OR WERE TOLD OF. LOCAL ORGANIZATION SEEMED FARILY EFFICIENT, AND ABLE TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION.

13 ABUDWAK (REGION OF GALGADUD):

CAMP IN ABUDWAK DISTRICT VISITED BY EMBASSY TEAM WAS AT BALAMBALE. THIS WAS A LARGE CAMP LOCATED AT THE SITE OF A GOOD NUMBER OF WHEELS. THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES AT THIS CAMP GIVEN BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES WAS 2,577. THIS NUMBER SEEMED REASONABLY ACCURATE, JUDGING BY THE NUMBER OF SHELTERS. THE BREAKDOWN GIVEN WAS: 1,035 MEN, 1,542 WOMEN;

BY AGE:	0-6	7-14	15 AND OVER	TOTALS
MALES:	432	341	262	1075
FEMALES:	513	424	605	1542
TOTALS:	945	765	867	2577

THERE SEEMED TO BE NO AGRICULTURAL EFFORTS IN PROGRESS, AND ONLY SOME SMALL HERDS OF GOATS, SHEEP AND CAMELS -- CERTAINLY NOT ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THE INHABITANTS OF THE

CAMP. HERE AGAIN, THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CAMP SEEMED
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GOOD, AND THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE REFUGEES GOOD.
SHELTER WAS IN TRADITIONAL NOMADIC SHELTERS OF STICKS
AND MATTING AND IN TENTS (WHICH WE WERE TOLD WERE DONATED
BY THE WEST GERMANS).

14. HARGEISA DISTRICT (REGION OF WEST GALBEED):

THE CAMP AT HARUNTI, APPROXIMATELY 10 KILOMETERS NORTH-
EAST OF HARGEISA, IS ALSO THE SITE OF A LARGE EARTHEN
DAM WHICH WAS BUILT TO CATCH AND UTILIZE THE WATER OF
SEASONAL RAINS. THE PROJECT WAS ANOTHER STARTED BY
THE GSDR "CRASH PROGRAM" AND TURNED OVER TO REFUGEES
AS A RESETTLEMENT PROJECT. WE WERE GIVEN AN ESTIMATE
OF 2,012 REFUGEES AT THIS CAMP, AS FIGURE WHICH SEEMED
REASONABLY ACCURATE, GAUGING BY APPEARANCES. THE BREAK-
DOWN OF THAT NUMBER IS: 853 MALES, 1,150 FEMALES; 815
CHILDREN (OF WHICH 436 MALE, 379 FEMALE AND 314 OF
SCHOOL AGE). AT HARUNTI, THE FIGURE OF 2,012 WAS ALSO

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GIVEN TO THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE SEVERAL DAYS LATER.
A DIFFERENT BREAKDOWN, HOWEVER, WAS GIVEN: CHILDREN

0-6: 421; CHILDREN 6-14: 795; ADULT MALES: 432; ADULT FEMALES: 362.) SHELTERS WERE CONSTRUCTED BOTH OF CORRUGATED TIN, AND OF TRADITIONAL MATERIALS, MOSTLY THE FORMER. A BUILDING FOR USE AS A SCHOOL HAS ALSO BEEN CONSTRUCTED, IT WAS IN USE AT THE TIME OF OUR VISIT. ORGANIZATION AT THIS CAMP SEEMED EXCELLENT, AND CONDITIONS OVERALL ADEQUATE. ONE COMPLAINT THAT WAS NOTED WAS A LACK OF VITAMINS, ALTHOUGH THIS HAD BEEN MENTIONED AT OTHER CAMPS AS WELL. (GIVEN THE GENERAL LACK OF SOPHISTICATION OF THESE PEOPLE, TALK OF VITAMINS STRUCK US AS PERHAPS SOMETHING THEY HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO MENTION.)

15. IN THE TOWN OF HARGEISA, EMBOFFS WERE SHOWN TWO REFUGEE PROCESSING CENTERS, BOTH OF WHICH WERE SCHOOL BUILDINGS. WE WERE INFORMED THAT EACH OF HARGEISA'S SIX DISTRICTS WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A REFUGEE CENTER. AT BOTH THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER GIVEN WAS 800, ALTHOUGH THAT NUMBER SEEMED SOMEWHAT INFLATED. TOO, ALTHOUGH UNDOUBTEDLY SOME REFUGEES WERE ACTUALLY LIVING AT THE CENTER, WE DOUBT THAT MOST OF THOSE SEEN WERE. AT THE UNCLASSIFIED

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TIME OF EMBASSY TEAM VISIT, A NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN AND SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL MEDIA ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP. AT BOTH CENTERS SEVERAL REFUGEES, REPRESENTED AS OGADENI CLAN LEADERS, HELD FORTH ON THE SITUATION.

16. AT HARIFE, APPROXIMATELY 20 KILOMETERS SOUTHEAST OF HARGEISA, THERE WAS A LARGER REFUGEE TRANSITTING STATION. AT THIS CAMP IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SHELTER WAS BADLY NEEDED, AS THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NONE, AND THE REFUGEES WERE LIVING UNDER TREES. THE ESTIMATE OF NUMBERS GIVEN WAS 1,500, BUT WE WERE TOLD THAT ARRIVALS WERE COMING IN DAILY, AND OTHERS LEAVING, AND THEREFORE NUMBER FLUCTUATED. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO GAUGE THE ACCURACY OF THE COUNT GIVEN. THE NUMBER GIVEN TO THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE SEVERAL DAYS LATER WAS LOWER, 1,018. (BREAKDOWN: CHILDREN 0-6: 363; CHILDREN 6-14: 238; ADULT MALES: 127; ADULT FEMALES: 290.) THIS DISCREPANCY IN NUMBERS COULD, HOWEVER, VERY EASILY HAVE RESULTED FROM THE MOVING OF MANY OF THE REFUGEES TO MORE PERMANENT QUARTERS. AT THIS CAMP EMBOFFS WERE TOLD THAT MANY ITEMS WERE NEEDED, INCLUDING BUILDING MATERIALS, CLOTHING AND FOOD. AT THIS CAMP THERE SEEMED TO BE A NOTICEABLY HIGHER PROPORTION OF YOUNG MEN THAN WE HAD SEEN ELSEWHERE.

17. GEBILE DISTRICT (WEST GALBEED REGION):

TUG WAJALLE, SITUATED ABOUT 8 KILOMETERS FROM THE FRONTIER ON THE MAIN ROAD TO JIGJIGA, IS THE SITE OF A MAJOR REFUGEE CAMP. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE CAMP WAS ORIGINALLY ANOTHER OF THE GSDR AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS WHICH RECENTLY WAS TURNED OVER TO REFUGEES. THIS CAMP

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WAS BOTH THE LARGEST AND THE BEST ORGANIZED WHICH WAS VISITED BY THE EMBASSY TEAM. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REFUGEES GIVEN WAS 6,000, MOST OF WHICH WE WERE TOLD WERE WOMEN AND CHILDREN. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THIS FIGURE, WE DO NOT THINK THAT IT IS FAR OFF, AND THERE SEEMED TO BE A GREAT PREPONDERANCE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES GIVEN TO THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOUR DAYS LATER WAS OF 7,346. (THRE BREAKDOWN OF THAT FIGURE GIVEN WAS: CHILDREN 4,937; ADULT MALES: 819; ADULT FEMALES: 1590.) IN ADDITION TO EFFORTS TO FEED, HOUSE AND CLOTHE THE REFUGEES, SCHOOLING FOR CHILDREN HAS BEEN STARTED. WE WERE TOLD THAT THERE WERE 1,400 SCHOOLAGE CHILDREN, AND 25 TEACHERS. MOST OF THE REFUGEES AT THIS CAMP WERE HOUSED IN TENTS, MANY OF WHICH HAD BEEN SUPPLIED BY THE IRANIAN RED CROSS. OTHERS CAME FROM OTHER FOREIGN SOURCES, BUT IT IS NOT KNOWN WHICH. MOST OF THE REFUGEES WE WERE TOLD HAD COME FROM HARAR, DIRE DAWA, JIGJIGA AND VICINITY. THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 75 ARRIVALS DAILY. ORGANIZATION OF THE CAMP SEEMED EXCELLENT, AND RELATIONS WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL OFFICIALS ALSO VERY GOOD. THE SYSTEM OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION SEEMED TO WORK WELL, WITH EACH FAMILY INSCRIBED ON A ROSTER. FOOD WAS STORED IN TWO LARGE WAREHOUSES. THERE ALSO SEEMED TO BE A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF BLANKETS AND CLOTHING. THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM FACED BY THIS CAMP IS ONE WHICH IS FACED BY THE ENTIRE REGION, AND THAT IS SHORTAGE OF WATER, AS THE RAINS THIS YEAR HAVE NOT BEEN ADEQUATE. THIS HAS HAMPERED SEVERELY AGRICULTURAL EFFORTS, AND PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO A SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF MEASLES WHICH TOOK THE LIVES OF OVER 20 CHILDREN.

18. THE LAST SITE VISITED AT ABASEYO WAS NOT ACTUALLY A REFUGEE CAMP, BUT RATHER WAS A HOUSING PROJECT IN WHICH A NUMBER OF REFUGEE FAMILIES WOULD BE HOUSED. OSTENSIBLY THESE REFUGEES WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE

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LIFE OF THE VILLAGE. THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 50

HOUSES CONSTRUCTED OF TIMBER SUPPORTS AND CORRUGATED
TIN. THE CONSTRUCTION WAS VERY POOR, BOTH BECAUSE OF
MATERIALS USED AS WELL AS POOR WORKMANSHIP. EACH
BUILDING CONSISTED OF TWO TWO-ROOM FAMILY UNITS. THE
COST PER FAMILY UNIT WAS GIVEN AT 25,000 SOMALI SHIL-
LINGS (ABOUT DOLS 4,000). THERE WERE NO SANITARY FACILITIES,
BUT WE WERE INFORMED THAT LATRINES WERE TO BE CONSTRUCTED
LATER.
VOUGHT

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